

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### An Introduction to Shakespeare's Language

Because Shakespeare wrote nearly four hundred years ago, some of the conventions that he uses in his plays present problems for modern readers. Most of Shakespeare's lines are written in poetry. Although these lines don't usually rhyme, they do have a set rhythm (called *meter*). To achieve the meter, Shakespeare arranges words so that the syllables, which are stressed or said more loudly than others, fall in a regular pattern: dah DUM dah DUM dah DUM dah DUM dah DUM. For example, read the following lines from *Romeo and Juliet* aloud:

~a  
*Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,  
 Which mannerly devotion shows in this. (I,v)*  
 ~a

Because you are familiar with the words that Shakespeare uses here, you naturally stressed every second syllable:

~a  
*Good PIL'grim, YOU' do WRONG' your HAND' too MUCH',  
 Which MAN'nerLY' deVO'tion SHOWS' in THIS'.  
 ~a*

The pattern of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, dah DUM, is called an *iamb*. Each pattern is referred to as a *foot*. Because Shakespeare uses five iambic feet to a line, this pattern is known as *iambic pentameter*.

In order for Shakespeare to maintain the set meter of most lines, he often structures the lines differently than normal English speech. He may change the normal order of words so that the stressed syllables fall in the appropriate place. For example, the following sentence has no set meter:

~a  
*This MORN'ing BRINGS' WITH' it a GLOOM'ing PEACE'.  
 ~a*

However, Shakespeare turns these words around a bit to maintain the meter in *Romeo and Juliet*:

~a  
*a GLOOM'ing PEACE' this MORN'ing WITH' it BRINGS'.  
 ~a*

He may also shorten words by omitting letters so that a two-syllable word is one syllable. As a result, *over* often appears as *o'er* and *'tis* in place of *it is*.

Shakespeare also uses forms of words that we rarely use today, four hundred years later. Among these are the personal pronouns *thou* (you), *thine* (your, yours), *thee* (you as in "to you"), and *thyself* (yourself). Often Shakespeare also uses verb endings that we no longer use. For example, *hath* is an old form of *has* and *art* an older form of *are*. You're also likely to encounter several words or phrases that we no longer use at all: *anon* instead of *soon* or *shortly* or *prithie* meaning *I pray to thee* (you).

## Hansen, Stephanie

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**From:** bounce-9626887@emailenfuego.net on behalf of Shakespeare Sonnet-a-Day [sonnets@sonnet-a-day.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 19, 2008 8:46 AM  
**To:** Hansen, Stephanie  
**Subject:** Shakespeare Sonnet-a-Day

## Shakespeare Sonnet-a-Day

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### Sonnet #18

Posted:

XVIII.


Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

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**Hansen, Stephanie**

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**From:** bounce-9626887@emailenfuego.net on behalf of Shakespeare Sonnet-a-Day [sonnets@sonnet-a-day.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 04, 2009 8:45 AM  
**To:** Hansen, Stephanie  
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## Shakespeare Sonnet-a-Day

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### Sonnet #130

Posted:

CXXX.


My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

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Chicago IL USA 60610

## PROLOGUE

Two households, both alike in dignity,  
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;  
Whole misadventured piteous overthrows  
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.  
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,  
And the continuance of their parents' rage,  
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,  
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;  
The which if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

The above is an example of a/an \_\_\_\_\_.

The rhyme scheme is \_\_\_\_\_.

It is made up three sets of four lines called \_\_\_\_\_ and  
two final lines called a \_\_\_\_\_.

The entire fourteen lines is based on a/an \_\_\_\_\_ form.

Why would Shakespeare have chosen to use this format in his prologue?

## Prologue

**Chorus:** Two households, both alike in dignity,  
In fair Verona where we lay our scene,  
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,  
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.  
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes  
A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life,  
Whose misadventured, piteous overthrows  
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.  
The fearful passage of their death marked love,  
And the continuance of their parents' rage,  
Which but their children's end, naught could remove,  
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;  
The which if you with patient ears attend,  
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

### Questions

1. What is the place setting of the play?
2. What is the relationship between the two households?
3. What does Shakespeare mean by "star-crossed lovers"?
4. What happens to the lovers?
5. What is the subject matter for this play?
6. What does the chorus ask of the audience in the last two lines? Why?
7. What is the name of the poetic form which Shakespeare uses for the Prologue? How many lines are there? Mark the rhyming pattern.
8. Underline examples of poetic language.

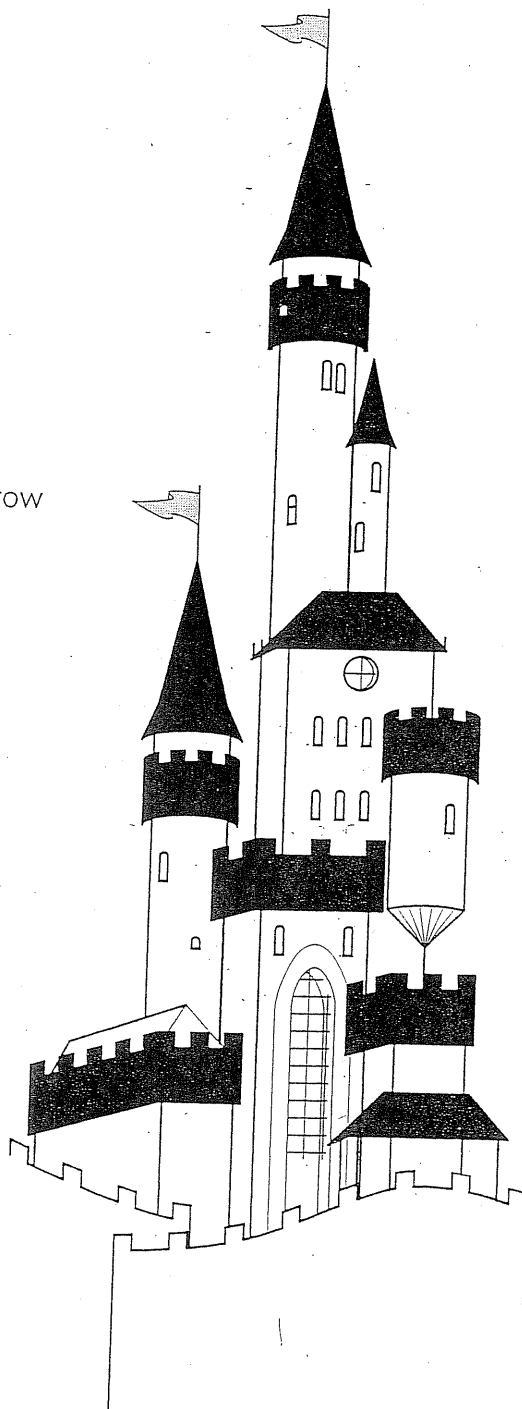
Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Romeo and Juliet*  
Vocabulary Activity  
Act I

**Directions**

Match the word to the meaning.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. aye
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. thee
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. shrift
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. whither
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. fair
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. thy
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. good-den
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. good morrow
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. thrice
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. fortnight
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. visage
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. fray
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. hither
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. anon
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. coz



- a. your
- b. fight
- c. yes
- d. face
- e. three times
- f. where
- g. you
- h. two weeks
- i. cousin
- j. confession
- k. soon
- l. beautiful
- m. good-bye
- n. there
- o. good afternoon

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Directions

In each section, match the correct term with the definition.

#### Section I

- |                  |                   |                   |                  |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| a. rising action | b. exposition     | c. falling action | d. turning point |
| e. catastrophe   | f. exciting force |                   |                  |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The introductory section of a play in which characters, time, place, and situation are presented.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The series of events leading to a high point of action.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Initiates action in the play.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The highest point of the action in the play.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The series of events following the high point of the action.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The final revelation or outcome of a tragedy.

#### Section II

- |                |            |             |               |              |
|----------------|------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| a. stage right | b. upstage | c. audience | d. stage left | e. downstage |
|----------------|------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The right side of the stage from the actor's point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The left side of the stage from the actor's point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The area of the stage away from the footlights.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The area of the stage close to the footlights.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The viewers, who need to be responsive to the action on stage.

#### Section III

- |            |           |               |                |          |
|------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|----------|
| a. tragedy | b. comedy | c. act        | d. protagonist | e. props |
| f. theme   | g. plot   | h. motivation | i. dialogue    |          |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. The hero or main character of a play.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The stage furnishings, which add reality to a play.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The main idea of a play.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. An amusing play that ends happily.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. A subdivision of a play.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. The conversation of a play.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. The main action or events of a play.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. A play in which the protagonist meets with defeat or death.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. The reasons behind a character's actions.

